

**BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES**

Date: December 01, 2016

Meeting #234

Project: Port Covington East Waterfront Park

Phase: Final

Location: 301 East Cromwell Street – Port Covington

PRESENTATION:

Ms. Caroline Paff, Vice President of Sagamore Development, introduced the project team, existing site conditions and referenced prior discussions and key comments from March 3 UDARP Meeting.

Ms. Betsy Boykin, Principal of Core Studio Design, presented the revised East Waterfront Park design proposal with further development on the following:

1. Circulation and Program – series of walkways, plazas, decks, docks, terraces, perches, portals, a lawn and a multiuse path that organize the park experience.
2. Materiality – wood, stone, concrete and metal grate surfaces that navigate various portions of the landscape and blue/green concrete for the multiuse path.
3. Site Furniture – coordinated family of site objects to accommodate waste management, bike security and signage in addition to “The Next great Baltimore Bench” winning entry bench design.
4. Plant Palette – planting that respond to the various landscape zones in the park – terrace, meadow, lawn, upland coastal, multiuse path and bioretention channel, shoreline and wetlands.

Ms. Boykin also presented detailed sections, diagrams and views of the various sections of the park and the archaeological pier.

Mr. Chris Streb, Ecological Engineer with BIOHABITATS, Inc., reviewed the Port Covington Ecological Principles and outlined the main ecozones in the park and the corresponding ecoservices. He introduced key ecological interventions – wetlands, living shoreline, breakwater biohuts, tidal wetlands planter and oyster nursery to be deployed incrementally at the project site.

Mr. Ronnie Younts, Principal of Younts Design, Inc., introduced the signage strategy for Port Covington and the East Waterfront Park. Main package includes a universal bracket system for attaching signs to various site elements, typefaces, arrows & pictograms applied throughout the area and a family of signage types of varied scale corresponding to specific site applications. The designers also envisioned gabion signage at the water edge as waterfront identity marker for Port Covington.

Claude Engle, Principal of Claude Engle Lighting Design, presented the lighting concept for the East Waterfront Park at Port Covington proposing a strong hierarchy of vertical lighting, varying light levels by activity and eco-friendly light. The lighting package includes elements tailored to the strategic illumination of various zones in the park and sensitive to the natural surroundings and extended views.

Comments from the Panel:

The Panel complemented the design team's articulate development of the project's materiality and implementation strategy while expressing concern of the departure from some of the original project design intent and recommended further consideration of the following:

1. **Terminus at Linear Park** - the panel expressed concern over the lack of resolution at the east-most portion of the project with respect to the physical or implied terminus of the Multiuse Path at the end of the Linear Park and suggested that the designers look to terminate the path at a significant moment, like the entry to the archaeological pier, or develop a more deliberate event at the end of the path. Some panelists questioned the design intent of the Linear Park with respect to specific use and as it relates to the other zones in the East Waterfront Park.
2. **Diagonal Path** – the panel expressed concern over the compressed entry point to the park on the Diagonal Path and its lack of integration with the plaza to the west. Also problematic was the Diagonal Path's arrival at a nondescript location on the Archaeological Pier, away from the water taxi platform or any other gathering area.
3. **Archaeological Pier** – the panel was critical towards the lack of clear path and space making with respect to the Archaeological Pier and encouraged the design team to clarify the movement by keeping all pathways parallel to the pier, create clear sense of arrival and a 'place to be' at various points of the journey and employing a spatial strategy that facilitates the sense of matriculation and transformation from land to water, from plaza/lawn to promenade to platforms, as intended in the original concept for the pier.
4. **Multiuse Path** – Panelists generally questioned the need to put high emphasis on that path and discussed potential conflict of movement with the introduction of skateboarding curbs in addition to bicycles, joggers and pedestrians on the same path. Additional comments questioned the durability of the proposed glass aggregate in the blue/green concrete for the Multiuse Path in freezing weather conditions. Others challenged the land/water metaphor and the related coloration of the concrete path as potentially undermining the authentic quality of the working harbor aesthetic and the intent of the ecological reclamation effort in the area in favor of environmental branding or embellishment.
5. **Intersection and Hierarchy** – the panel found the overall plan to be lacking in clear hierarchy at points of intersection like the one at the entry to the archaeological pier and the multiuse path or the diagonal path intersecting with the multiuse path and the crescent overlooks. The panel encouraged the design team to edit and clarify the spatial intent of all key elements in the plan.
6. **Varied Experiences**– the panel found the use of guardrails generally excessive while recognizing the need to provide a safe environment and the challenges involved in striking a balance. Main concerns involved the loss of truly immersive and distinct experiences from the original concept across the site in favor of relentless guardrails and resulting overlooks and spaces offering very similar experiences. The project team was encouraged to seek ways to minimize the use of railings, visually and physically, by examining specific use of space and limiting guardrails to strategic areas and controlling access to the pier after dark in order to maintain, to the extent possible, the immersive quality of the landscape.
7. **Site Elements Integration** - the panel applauded the thoughtful development of lighting, signage and urban furniture design but highlighted lack of integration among the systems. Some panelists thought that the 'Baltimore Bench' took exception in form from the rest of the site objects. Others found the reclaimed distressed wood in the signage objects conflicting the sharper polished use of wood for the benches as well as the precise application of stone and concrete throughout the rest of the project. The universal bracket system for signage was well received with some concerns of the additional visual noise added by the hardware as proposed. The panel encouraged the design team to work together in order to integrate lighting, signage and site furnishings into a coordinated environment that complements the urban ecology and anthropology of the site.

Panel Action:

The Panel recommended Continued Final review with comments.

Attending:

Betsy Boykin, Stephen Young, Andrew Ngure – Core Studio Design
Caroline Paff, Michael Pokorny, Liz Williams, Casey Larkin, Kimiya Darrell, Laurie Davidson –
Sagamore Development
Jacob Kain – Elkus Manfredi
Susan Williams – STV
Kristy Bischoff, Jared Barnhart – Daft McCune Walker
Dan Daries – Delon Hampton & Assoc.
Alex Jackson – Maroon PR
Allie Steimel, Claude Engle – CRE Lighting
Laurie Schwartz – Waterfront Partnership
Brian Miller – Under Armour
Liling Tien – PELA Design
Chris Streb, Justin Park - BioHabitats
Ronnie Younts, David Thomas – YDI

Messrs. Bowden, Rubin, Burns, Haresign and Ms. Ilieva* - UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Tom Stosur, Christina Hartsfield, Jaleesa Tate - Planning